

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 0082

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PINS, IS, JO, EG, SY
SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION ON THE WEST BANK

REF: JERUSALEM 9

SUMMARY: RECENT RASH OF STATEMENTS BY SADAT, ASSAD AND
HUSSEIN CONCERNING A POSSIBLE LINK BETWEEN JORDAN AND
A PALESTINIAN WEST BANK/GAZA STATE HAS CAUSED A CERTAIN
AMOUNT OF CONFUSION AMONG WEST BANK LEADERS. AMONG
OTHER THINGS, LACK OF CLEAR PUBLIC POSITION BY PLO HAS
LEFT THEM SOMEWHAT IN THE LURCH. PRINCIPAL MAYORS TEND
TO EMPHASIZE PRIORITY FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF FULLY
INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE AFTER WHICH LINKS WITH
JORDAN (AND PERHAPS OTHER ARAB STATES) COULD BE DISCUSSED.
HUSSEIN'S RECENT OSTENTATIOUS RECEPTION OF FORMER MAYOR
OF HEBRON IS DISCOUNTED BY WEST BANK LEADERSHIP. END
SUMMARY.

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1. SADAT'S WASHINGTON POST INTERVIEW, THE ANNOUNCEMENTS
MADE AFTER THE SADAT-HUSSEIN MEETING AND ASSAD'S
STATEMENTS TO TIME HAVE TENDED TO WEST BANKERS TO
REVISE OR UNDERCUT THE 1974 RABAT DECISION. THIS HAS
PLACED MOST WEST BANK MAYORS IN AN AWKWARD POSITION --
EVENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD APPEAR TO BE MOVING IN THE

DIRECTION OF SUPPORT FOR A WEST BANK/GAZA STATE LINKED TO JORDAN AT A TIME WHEN THE PLO'S FORTUNES ARE AT A LOW EBB AND ITS LEADERSHIP DIVIDED. THEIR DILEMMA HAS BEEN COMPOUNDED BY A LACK OF A CLEAR PUBLIC REACTION ON THE PART OF THE PLO AND ARAFAT.

2. THE MAYOR OF WEST BANK'S LARGEST CITY, NABLUS, IS REPORTED IN THE ARABIC PRESS JAN 18 AS WELCOMING THE RESULTS OF THE SADAT-HUSSEIN MEETING AS A VICTORY FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND THE PLO. (AS REPORTED BY ARABIC PRESS HERE, SADAT AND HUSSEIN AGREED THAT PLO SHOULD PARTICIPATE AT GENEVA ON EQUAL FOOTING AND JORDAN SHOULD COME AS CONFRONTATION STATE.) ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REFTEL) THE HOSTILE REACTION OF ONE OF THE EXTREME NATIONALIST MAYORS (HANOUN OF TULKARM) TO IMPLICATION IN SADAT'S WASHINGTON POST INTERVIEW THAT LESS THAN FULL INDEPENDENT WEST BANK/GAZA STATE SHOULD BE LINKED TO JORDAN. WE BELIEVE HANOUN'S REACTION IS SHARED BY OTHER STRONGLY PRO-PLO ELEMENTS.

3. MOST WEST BANK LEADERS WE HAVE TALKED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT A WEST BANK/GAZA MINI-STATE WILL HAVE TO HAVE DE FACTO ECONOMIC AND OTHER TIES TO JORDAN. CURRENT TRENT IS TO STRESS THAT SELF-DETERMINATION AND INDEPENDENCE MUST COME FIRST AFTER WHICH PALESTINIAN STATE WILL BE FREE TO DEFINE ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS "AS AN EQUAL." MAYOR OF HEBRON EMPHASIZED THIS TO CONGEN JAN 18. FOR REASONS GOING BACK TO THE JORDANIAN ADMINISTRATION OF THE WEST BANK FROM 1950-67 AND THE SHOOT-OUT BETWEEN THE HKJ AND THE PLO IN 1970, CONFIDENTIAL

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THERE IS NO WIDESPREAD SENTIMENT FOR RETURNING TO A PRE'67 RELATIONSHIP WITH AMMAN.

4. WE HAVE NOTICED INDICATIONS HERE THAT ISRAELIS CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR EVIDENCE WEST BANKERS ARE TURNING AWAY FROM PLO AND BECOMING "REALISTIC". GONNEN'S REMARKS (TEL AVIV 94) CONCERNING LAVISH RECEPTION ACCORDED EX MAYOR OF HEBRON IN AMMAN AND ALLEGED DISENCHANTMENT OF WEST BANKERS WITH MAYORS ELECTED IN THE SPRING OF '76 COINCIDE WITH BACKGROUNDEES BY GOI LEADERS HERE. WHILE THERE IS NO DOUBT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FRUSTRATION EXISTS AMONG WEST BANKERS THAT NEW MAYORS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO EFFECT ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR LOT, WE SEE NO SIGNIFICANT DIMINUTION IN MAIN STREAM SUPPORT FOR THEM OR THE PLO. AS FOR SHEIK JAABARI, HE LIKE EX-MAYOR OF NABLUS HAJ MAZZOUZ AL MASARI, AND EX-JORDANIAN GOVERNOR OF EAST JERUSALEM ANWAR KHATIB (WHO HAVE ALSO MADE PILGRIMAGE TO AMMAN), IS AN "EX" AND PROBABLY HAS ONLY CLAN SUPPORT IN THE HEBRON

AREA.

5. WEST BANKERS RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE PROBABLY INSUPERABLE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ANY DIRECT WEST BANK REPRESENTATION AT THE REPORTED UPCOMING PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL SESSION. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF AN EFFORT BY PLO SUPPORTERS TO DRAFT A DECLARATION WHICH THE WEST BANK MAYORS WOULD SUBMIT TO THE PNC. IN ITS PRESENT FORM, IT REPORTEDLY CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS: LOYALTY TO THE RABAT DECLARATION; SUPPORT FOR THE PLO AND ARAFAT PERSONALLY; ESTABLISHMENT A A COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE CAPABLE OF ASSURING SELF-DETERMINATION. DOCUMENT IS CURRENTLY DORMANT PENDING DECISION OF DATE OF PNC BUT WE WOULD EXPECT TO REVIVE IF AND WHEN PNC ACTUALLY CONVENES.
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